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ABSTRACT

The videotape "Central American Children Speak: Our Lives and Dreams" begins and ends in a U.S. classroom where students are studying Central America. The video, which was designed to help children gain a basic understanding of one another, follows seven Central American children through a typical day of school, work, and play. Their stories provide a glimpse into the lives of the poor, who form a majority in Guatemala and Nicaragua. The study guide was developed for use in a variety of grades and classroom situations. It also provides suggestions for preparatory activities, including vocabulary building, map exercises, and ways to discuss cultural stereotypes. Ten exercises are presented for use after students see the video, and activities are outlined that involve games and sports, weaving and designs, painting murals, and music. The detailed stories of the children in the video are presented, and a timeline of the region's history, maps of Nicaragua and Guatemala, the United Nations statement on Rights of the Child, and a list of 18 recommended resources are attached. (SLD)

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Central American Children Speak

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Our Lives & Our Dreams

Educator Study Guide to the Video

with Activities, Stories and Background Information

Resource Center of The Americas, Minneapolis, MN

UD031 130

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Central American Children Speak: Our Lives and Our Dreams

Study Guide to the Video
with
Stories and Background Information for Educators

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Introduction

Central American Children Speak: Our Lives and Our Dreams begins and ends in a U.S. classroom where fourth grade students are studying Central America. Their questions about their Central American peers guide the video-makers as they film the everyday lives of children in rural and urban Guatemala and Nicaragua. The video follow several Central American children through a typical day of school, work, and play, and records the realities of their lives.

This video was designed to help children gain a basic understanding of one another. It focuses on mutual concerns of all children, including family, food, play, education, work, safety, and dreams for the future. Through these issues, it is our hope that children can find connections to one another, no matter where they live in the world.

As the video vividly portrays, however, the particular circumstances in which these children live are also very different. It does not attempt to show the lives of an entire cross-section of children, but provides a glimpse into the lives of the poor, who form a majority in Guatemala and Nicaragua. In Guatemala, for example, eight of every ten children live in poverty, and six in ten live in rural areas. More than half of Guatemala's people are indigenous. In Nicaragua, the people are more racially mixed than in Guatemala, with less than one in ten considered indigenous. However, the incidence of poverty is as great. (See *Country Profiles* on page 19.)

This guide suggests themes that are relevant to all children, such as daily life, caring for each other, happiness and fear. By focusing on these mutual concerns, children learn that they are all members of the same human family, sharing the resources of the same planet.

Central American Children Speak seeks to promote understanding and respect among children of the world. Its honest and realistic portrayal of children's lives shows the resiliency and creativity of young people who live in very difficult situations. In the video, the children are our teachers.

— Meredith Sommers, Education Coordinator
Resource Center of The Americas

Using this Video and Study Guide

Central American Children Speak: Our Lives and Our Dreams provides an introduction to Guatemala and Nicaragua through the lives of seven children. This study guide — along with its maps and other resources recommended in the appendix — is designed to enrich your teaching unit on Central America. If you are timid about teaching on Central America for fear that you aren't an "expert," this guide can encourage you to present the subject matter and continue to learn with your students as it is taught.

This study guide was developed for use by a variety of grades and classroom situations, and teachers may adapt the activities and discussion questions to various skill and knowledge levels. For example, stories about the children featured in the video can be used as reading lessons, especially for grades four through six. Math and geometry work-sheets are based on actual situations and can also be adapted to various skill levels.

It is important for children and adults alike to understand the historical, social, economic and political circumstances in which other children live. This guide will help students ask critical questions and encourage them to seek additional information. It provides statistical information about Guatemala, Nicaragua and the United States. Background information on Guatemala and Nicaragua is woven into the stories and lessons. A brief time-line is provided for an historical overview.

We also strongly recommend that you show this video in at *least* two class sessions, focusing first on Guatemala and then on Nicaragua. For example, at Sheridan School in Minneapolis, where this video was partially filmed, students first looked at maps, read stories from Guatemala and Nicaragua, and learned a few statistics and historical facts. Then they brainstormed a list of what they would like to know about their peers in these Central American countries. This guided their attention when they watched the video. After the viewing, the students talked about what they saw, what they heard and what they felt.

This study guide also provides suggestions for preparatory activities, including vocabulary building, map exercises and ways to discuss cultural stereotypes. Some or all of the lessons suggested by the guide may then be used as follow-up activities.

Preparing for the Video

A. Vocabulary Building

These words from the video might be new to some students. Write them on the board and discuss them with your students, so that they can recognize them while watching the video:

1. **Barrio** (**bar'**-ee-oh): a neighborhood
2. **Cakchiquel** (katch-ee-**kel'**): one of the more than twenty groups of Mayan descendents; shares a common language
3. **Campesino** (comp-ah-**see'**-no): a person who works the land; a peasant farmer
4. **Córdoba** (**cord'**-oh-bah): Nicaraguan currency; 5 cordobas make 1.00 U.S. dollar (1993 exchange rate)
5. **Counter-revolutionary**: in Nicaragua, a person who fought against that country's 1979 revolution; also known as a "contra"
6. **Huipil** (whee-**peel'**): a colorful, hand-woven blouse worn by indigenous women in Guatemala
7. **Indigenous person**: a native or original person of a country or land; "Indian"
8. **Quetzal** (kate-**sahl'**): Guatemalan currency; 5 quetzales are equal to 1.00 U.S. dollar (1993 exchange rate); also, a rare bird native to Guatemala
9. **Tortilla** (tor-**tee'**-ah): a flat pancake-like bread made of ground corn which is a staple food of Central America

B. Images and Stereotypes of Central Americans

1. Before viewing the video, ask students to describe what images they have about children in Guatemala and Nicaragua. How do they look? What do they wear? What do they do? How do they live? What are their families like? What things about their lives are similar to or different from the lives of children in the United States?

2. Ask your students to develop specific questions about the lives of the children in the video and list them on the board. Remind students to keep these questions in mind as they watch the video, to see if their questions are answered.

C. Map Exercises

1. Using a large map in your classroom (or the maps supplied on pages 21 and 22 of this study guide), help students locate Guatemala and Nicaragua on the map. Where are they in reference to each other? Where are they in reference to the United States? To your own state?

2. Distribute copies of the maps (on pages 21 and 22). Color the maps and locate three of the cities mentioned in the video, including Guatemala City, Guatemala; and Managua and Estelí, Nicaragua.

Exercises and Questions for Discussion After the Video

EXERCISE 1:
Finding Connections / Recognizing Differences

This exercise is designed to help students recognize their commonalities with Central American children, as well as what sets them apart.

Ask students what they observed about children in the video that was similar to their lives. Make a list of all the similarities they find. Alongside the similarities, develop a list of things which are different in the lives of Central American children. Then have students think about how they obtain some of the things they have in common, such as food, pocket money or clothing, and compare their list to how Central American children get these same things.

EXERCISE 2:
Making Observations and Interpretations

This exercise is designed to help students see the difference between what they observe and how they interpret that observation.

After viewing the video, make two columns on the board, entitled "Observations" and "Interpretations." Ask students to relate interesting things which they saw or heard in the video and jot them down in the appropriate column. Encourage only observations, as the first part of this exercise is to develop the skills of a keen observer.

Next, ask students to speculate what their observations mean and record them in the "interpretation" column. Help guide your students in differentiating between what they observe and what it means. For example:

OBSERVATIONS		**INTERPRETATIONS**
What I Saw	What I Heard	What I Thought
Kids carrying pails on their heads.	*Rooster crowing*	*Kids get up early to do chores such as carrying water.*

Please Note: *Sometimes students will notice minute details and draw conclusions based, naturally, on their own experience or insufficient information. Students might need help from teachers to understand cultural differences or how situations might be seen through the eyes of those who are living the experience. For example, they might conclude that in La Isla, Guatemala, because the houses are small and made of scrap materials, children are unhappy living there. However, the teacher might point out that in the video, Karin and Maria talk about how beautiful their homes are, and how happy they are to be living on their own land.*

EXERCISE 3:

Generalizations and Stereotypes

This exercise is designed to help students understand that many images of other people are based on stereotypes. It will also illustrate that stereotypes can go both ways: many people around the world have stereotypes about children living in the U.S.

There are many stereotypes about people from Central America, just as there are stereotypes about people in North America. Ask students what images or stereotypes they had about Guatemalan or Nicaraguan children before watching the video or review the list you wrote on the board. Did any of the children match those images? Did anything from the video surprise your students?

What do Central American children look like? After viewing the video, make a list of all the colors and textures of peoples' hair you saw in the film. What were the variations of skin and eye color? What kind of clothing did children wear? Was it surprising to see a wide variety of characteristics?

Ask students to look around their own classroom. What colors and textures of hair can be found in your classroom? What are the variations of skin and eye color? What kinds of clothing do you see? As a class, write or draw a group description of the student body. What generalizations can be made about your class, school, community, or country?

Many children in Central America think all kids in the United States are rich and live in huge houses with swimming pools. Is that picture accurate? Why or why not? Why do you think this stereotype exists about kids in the U.S.?

EXERCISE 4:

Taking Things for Granted

This exercise challenges students to take a look at what students expect and take for granted in the U.S.

Ask students to make a list of things which they take for granted in the United States, but which are privileges for the children in the video. For example, we assume that all children have a free education. But in the video, Jonni Frank must pay 10 cordobas per month ($2.00) for school, and also buy his books, supplies and a uniform. Many children in his country must earn their own money to go to school, because their parents can't afford the fees. Ask your students: What do Central America kids think about school? Is it important to them? Why or why not? Is this similar or different from kids in the U.S.? Why is education important? Who is responsible for education in Central America and in the U.S., and who pays for schools?

Many communities, like La Isla in Guatemala, have no electricity, sewage lines or telephones. Nine hundred people must get all their water from just a few taps, and sometimes the taps run dry. Have students write a story about how they would manage without water, electricity or a telephone, or have them describe how they would get an education if their parents couldn't afford to send them to school.

EXERCISE 5:

Caring for Others

This exercise helps students think about how people care for each other in friendships, families and communities.

Ask your students to describe the ways in which children in the video were caring for other children. What responsibilities do your students have in caring for younger family members or friends?

How do children in the video take care of kids that they don't know? For example, how is Lisbet's and Rafael's interest in children's rights related to taking care of others? Are there similar ways in your school or community that people care for each other? With students, brainstorm ideas and plan a class or small group project that helps others. For example, students can join the "Clean Your Desk Campaign" and donate school supplies to kids in Nicaragua. *(For more information, contact Quest for Peace, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD 20782.)*

The story of La Isla, Guatemala shows how communities sometimes need help from people in other countries. When La Isla was in danger of losing its land, people in Europe and North America wrote many letters to the Guatemala Supreme Court on the community's behalf. Can you think of other examples when people have supported others in their struggles? What was the outcome? Have your students ask their parents, grandparents, neighbors or friends to tell them about a time they worked for a cause or took a stand on a difficult issue. Have students research and give a report about other people in the world who are working for something they believe in. Who supported their struggle? Who opposed it? Why do some people take a stand for others, while some don't?

EXERCISE 6:

Some Things Make Me Happy and Some Things Make Me Afraid

This exercise helps students think about what makes children happy or afraid in different countries.

In the video, Central American children spoke about what makes them happy and what makes them afraid. Have your students , individually or in a group, draw pictures or write stories about what makes them happy and/or afraid. When this is completed, have students recall how children in the video answered the same questions. What similarities can be found? What differences?

EXERCISE 7:

Whose Land Is It?

In this exercise, students will learn more about the importance of land and who controls it, and how this has been an important issue throughout history.

Land has different meanings to different people. In many cultures, land belongs to individual people, and can be bought and sold. Many indigenous people, however, do not share this understanding. They believe

land is something which belongs to a whole community and exists for all people to use. They think that land should not be bought or sold by individuals of that community.

Discuss how the understanding of land ownership affects the customs and practices of a group of people. What are the benefits and disadvantages of individual vs. community ownership of land? Who should make decisions about the way land and resources are used? Should people who live and care for the land be able to live on it even if they don't own it? Should people who own land but don't live on it or care for it be able to keep it when others have no land?

EXERCISE 8:

Children's Rights are Human Rights

In 1959, the United Nations adopted the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. This came in response to international concern about the living conditions of children worldwide. More than three fourths of U.N. member nations have signed the declaration; however, the United States still has not signed. Find out why the U.S. has not signed the convention.

Distribute copies of the ten principles on the Rights of the Child (found on page 23 in the appendix) and discuss them.

Then ask your students to rewrite the principles in their own words. Copy these definitions on a large sheet of paper at the front of the class. Then have students draw or cut out pictures of children in various situations (such as those found in magazines) and attach them to the paper next to the principles they seem to coincide with. Display the collage on the wall of your classroom or in the hallway of your building.

EXERCISE 9:

One Thing I Would Like to Tell the President

This exercise encourages children to make their opinions known to their elected government officials.

All of the children featured in the video live in countries that elect their president. However, there are great differences in the ways that their governments work, and who controls power in their countries.

Children in the video were asked what they would like to tell their president. What responses did they give? What advice did they have for the U.S. president? Do your students think that presidents in Central America listen to advice from the U.S. president? Have them explain their answer. Ask your students what they would like to tell the presidents of the United States, Nicaragua or Guatemala. Write letters to the presidents with these messages.

The President of the United States: The White House, Washington D.C., 20500

Presidente de La Republica de Guatemala: Palacio Nacional, Guatemala City, Guatemala

Presidente de La Republica de Nicaragua: Casa de Gobierno, Managua, Nicaragua

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EXERCISE 10:

What I Would Like to Tell Central American Children About My Life

This exercise helps students to think about their daily lives, and what would be important to share with children of other countries.

Imagine that someone was making a video about the children in your school or community to show to kids in Central America. Have students role-play interviews with one another as though they were on camera. Or have students do an actual interview on videotape with another student in their classroom or school.

Ask students: What would you like to tell children in Central America about yourself, school, neighborhood, or country? How would you describe a typical day in your life? What games do you play, and how do you use your spare time? Do you have to work? Where and with whom do you live? What makes you happy? What makes you afraid? What do you want for your future? What parts of your life are most similar to the lives of children in Nicaragua and Guatemala? What parts are most different? What do you wish for the children you saw in the video?

One way students can share stories with children in other countries is to form pen pal relationships. Another way is to have your class become a partner with a school in another country. The organization World Pen Pals can help arrange contacts in Guatemala, Nicaragua and many other countries.

(For more information, contact World Pen Pals, 1649 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, or call 612/647-0191.)

Activities Involving Games, Sports, Art and Music

A. Games and Sports

Some games are played in almost every country, such as "tag" or "hide-and-seek." Ask your students to recall the games or sports which the children in the video played. Do your students also play games like these? Do they use the same equipment? Have students think about their favorite games and how they might play them if they were not able to buy equipment.

Some games are invented and "travel" with people when they move to other countries. A good example is baseball, whose rules were invented in Cooperstown, New York in 1839. Baseball "traveled" to Nicaragua in 1910 with the U.S. Marines who occupied that country until 1933. (The Marines were sent by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt to secure rights to build a canal across Nicaragua, connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.) When the Marines left, baseball stayed and became the national sport of Nicaragua.

Many Nicaraguans currently play on teams in North America. Do your students know their names? Which other North American baseball players were not born here? In what other countries is baseball a popular sport? What has been the United States' relationship to those countries?

Have students select a U.S. baseball player who was born in another country. Have students read a biography about that person, learn about his/her country of origin, or collect other information for a report.

B. Weaving and Designs

For a class project, have students design a pattern for a weaving on a piece of paper. Ask them first to make a new symbol or design that tells something about themselves. Then ask them to incorporate a design that reminds them of Guatemala, like a particular symbol, color, food, animal or sport. In small groups, have students combine their designs in rows or patterns. When this is completed, have the small groups combine their designs, making a "weaving" that includes the symbols of all the students.

Multi-colored, hand woven bracelets are popular among young people today. Bring several colors of embroidery thread to class and teach students how to make bracelets. Explain how weaving is a very social activity in many cultures, and talk about how the process of producing such a craft contribute to community life.

C. Murals

Murals — huge paintings which are often placed on walls of buildings, in parks or other public places — are a popular art form in many countries of Latin America, especially Mexico and Nicaragua. Murals are often used to teach history to people who are not able to read. Painting a mural is a way of bringing together people's ideas and experiences and recording them in an artistic way. Because murals are often painted by a group of people, they must decide together what images to include and what style to use.

Have students design a mural for their classroom. Together decide on a theme, such as the story of your school or neighborhood, or how children in your school are linked to children in Central America. Sketch a design for the mural, decide how it will be painted, and where it will be located. If you cannot find a large wall, paint the mural on a large roll of paper and fasten it to the wall.

IV. Music

What different kinds of music did students hear in the video? What instruments were played? How did students feel when they listened to the music? Explain that music is a "universal" language, one of the many ways people learn about one another and appreciate their commonalities and differences.

Find a cassette of Latin American music. Play selections from the tape and ask your students to describe how it makes them feel, or if it brings any memories to mind. Ask students how the music is similar or different to the music that they listen to at home or with their friends. Use taped music as a background to your classroom activities to help set a mood.

If possible, invite Latin American musicians to your classroom or school to perform and explain the history of their music. Or find Latin American musical rhythm instruments for your students to play.

MARIA AND KARIN

María and Karin are friends. They live in the same neighborhood or *barrio* in Guatemala City. Their barrio is called La Isla, which means "the island." María is fifteen and Karin is ten, but they are in the same grade in school. María started school three years ago when she moved to La Isla. She says that was the happiest time in her life.

About 900 people live in La Isla. Although most of the people are poor, they are very glad to live there. They have planted flowers and trees and keep their neighborhood very clean. Most people do not have electricity or telephones in their homes. They get their water for drinking and cooking from a faucet in the middle of the *barrio*. Most children help their families by getting water and carrying it home. Sometimes they must wait in line to get the water, and while they are waiting, they talk and play with their friends. If the line is very long, the children sometimes have to come back at night to get water.

Three years ago there was no school in La Isla. If the children wanted to go to school, they had to walk many miles. Now there is a school which was built by the people in the community. A church donated the building materials, including the cement blocks. The teachers are volunteers, and don't get paid for their work. They are going to school at the teacher's college and are doing their practice teaching in La Isla.

In La Isla there are *indigenous* (native) and *non-indigenous* people, but very few of the indigenous people wear their traditional clothing, which is made from beautifully woven cloth. They are afraid they will be discriminated against or treated badly if people know that they are Indian. If they wear non-indigenous clothing such as cotton or polyester dresses or pants, it is more difficult for others to know they are Indian.

For awhile, María and Karin were afraid that their homes would be taken away. A rich man in Guatemala City said that all the land in La Isla belongs to him. He said all the people in La Isla must move so that he can have the land back. The people in La Isla say the land is theirs because they paid for it, and they have the papers to prove it. To keep their land, they went to the Supreme Court in their country to let a judge decide who should live there.

Then some terrible things happened. One night, two men with guns came into La Isla and kidnapped a man. Another night two men from La Isla were shot. María and Karin were afraid something else might happen. Sometimes they felt so scared that they couldn't sleep.

Many people in the U.S. and other countries found out about the problems in La Isla and wanted to help. They wrote letters to the Supreme Court in Guatemala, and asked the judge to let the people keep their land. After six months, the judge decided that the people in La Isla could stay on the land. This is the first time in Guatemala that poor people went to the Supreme Court and got to keep their land. Now María and Karin aren't so scared when they go to sleep at night.

EVELIN

Evelín is an *indigenous* girl from the *Cakchiquel* group of Mayans. Indigenous people are also known as "Indians." They got that name from Christopher Columbus, who mistakenly thought he had landed in India in 1492 instead of the Americas. At home, Evelín's family speaks Cakchiquel. In school, she learns the Spanish language.

500 years ago, indigenous people like Evelín and her family had all the land in Guatemala. Then the Spanish came and took the land, and forced the indigenous people to work on plantations. Today, indigenous people are still being pushed off their land, and they are fighting to have their land rights respected.

Evelín lives in a rural community with her grandmother, parents, three sisters and one brother. Her last name is López-Hernandez. The name López comes from her father's family and the name Hernandez comes from her mother. Her town is called San Antonio Aguas Calientes, which is Spanish for Saint Anthony Hot Springs. This area used to have a hot springs and a large lake with bamboo on its shores. The people used the bamboo to make homes, boats and fences. They also wove mats, baskets and hats.

In 1980, the Guatemalan army came to the town and threatened the people. They drained the lake and damaged the hot springs. The bamboo stopped growing. To build their houses, boats, and fences, the people now had to use wood. They went into the mountains and cut down trees. Today the mountains are bare, and the soil is washing into the streams. The water in the lake is polluted.

As Mayan people, the López-Hernandez family continues a very old tradition of weaving. All the women in the family are weavers. They work on backstrap looms that they attach to trees or posts, and sit on the ground to weave. Some of their weavings are used for beautiful *huipiles*, or blouses which they wear. Other weavings are sold in the village market or from the shop in their home. The men in the family take the weavings and sew them into purses, vests, jackets and placemats which are then sold.

Evelín is eleven years old and has been weaving since she was five. She learned to weave from her grandmother. Many of her designs include traditional Mayan symbols that tell stories of the Mayan people, just like history books. Other symbols represent Christian traditions. Roman Catholic missionaries came to Guatemala in the 1500s to convert the indigenous people to Christianity. Many churches were built on top of Mayan religious sites. Today, many people practice a religion which is a blend of Mayan and Catholic beliefs and customs.

Evelín also likes to invent new designs and work them into her weaving. She uses brilliant colors. Purple is used for the Catholic Holy Week; red is for the memory of her ancestors; green is for the mountains; blue is for the sky; yellow is for the corn, the food of life; black is the color of mourning for people who have died; and orange is for *fiestas* (parties) and other celebrations.

ORLANDO

Orlando lives in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua. His neighborhood is called *Las Torres*, or "The Towers." It is named for the towers that carry electricity over the neighborhood. However, the houses in Las Torres don't have electricity because it is too expensive.

Orlando is thirteen years old. Every morning in school he studies math, science and Spanish. There is no school in the neighborhood where Orlando lives, so his neighbors have turned their one-room house into a classroom during the day for Orlando and twenty-five other students.

Orlando's teacher is named Marvín. Marvín is eighteen years old and lives in the community. Even though he has finished high school, he can't find a job. About half of the people in Managua are unemployed. Instead of receiving money for his work, Marvín gets food and a room in which to live.

The people in Las Torres are working together to improve their community. Recently they received money from the United Nations to build a school with three classrooms. The school is being built by the school children and their parents.

The community is also working to solve other problems. With money from Norway, the community bought a house for kids who work in the streets selling goods or washing cars. The children go to the house during the day for lunch, social activities, vocational training, art and music classes, and other services they can't get at home. The kids help to take care of the house, and do the cooking and the cleaning. They also help to make the rules for the house. One rule is that no drugs are allowed in the house, including glue, which some kids sniff to get high.

In the afternoon, Orlando works with his father, uncle and brothers to sell bread and rolls that his family bakes in their homes. Orlando and his family use their horse and cart to deliver bread to peoples' homes. The money they earn supports everyone in the family.

Many people in Nicaragua are very poor. One reason is that dictators ruled the country for many years. They took most of the land and other resources and gave it to their friends and family. The last dictator, Anastasio Somoza, was overthrown by the people of Nicaragua in 1979. However, there are still many economic and political problems in Nicaragua which have left many people without food, shelter, education and other basic things that they need to live.

JONNI FRANK

Jonni lives on a farm in northern Nicaragua. He is a farmer, or a *campesino*, as they are known in Latin America. He and his father are preparing the fields for planting. They grow corn and beans. They also raise a few cattle and chickens. In Nicaragua there are just two seasons, rainy and dry. It is the end of the dry season and the rains are about to begin.

Before 1979, the land where Jonni and his family live was owned by another person. Most of the land in Nicaragua was owned and used by friends or relatives of Anastasio Somoza, the last Nicaraguan dictator. The wealthy owners raised cattle for meat that was sold to the United States and other countries. Because so much of the land was used to raise food for exports, many people did not have enough food to eat, and Nicaragua became one of the poorest countries in the world.

After a revolution in 1979, campesinos who were willing to grow food for the people of Nicaragua were given land. Jonni's family got land which they share with other campesino families. It is called a farming cooperative. They work together to plant, harvest and sell the crops.

During the 1980s, Nicaragua suffered a brutal war. The counter-revolutionaries made frequent attacks on farms, schools and health clinics. Jonni was afraid the contras would kidnap him.

In 1984, Daniel Ortega was elected president of Nicaragua. He was from the Sandinista Party, which had led the revolution. In 1990, a different party won the election and Violeta Chamorro became the president. Her policies did not favor the poor people. Soon people had to pay for education and health care just like they had to during the days when the dictators ruled Nicaragua. Land was returned to previous owners, and Jonni is worried that his family will lose their farm.

The campesinos in Jonni's community help each other. They have formed a school called the Campesino University. They teach each other and share their knowledge about the weather and soil. These campesinos are "organic" farmers, which means that they don't use chemicals or other poisons to kill weeds or insects.

Jonni and his father are making a tool called an "A apparatus." They use it to make level rows on the hillsides for planting corn. Jonni and his father also will build low walls to keep the rain from running off the field and washing away, or eroding the soil.

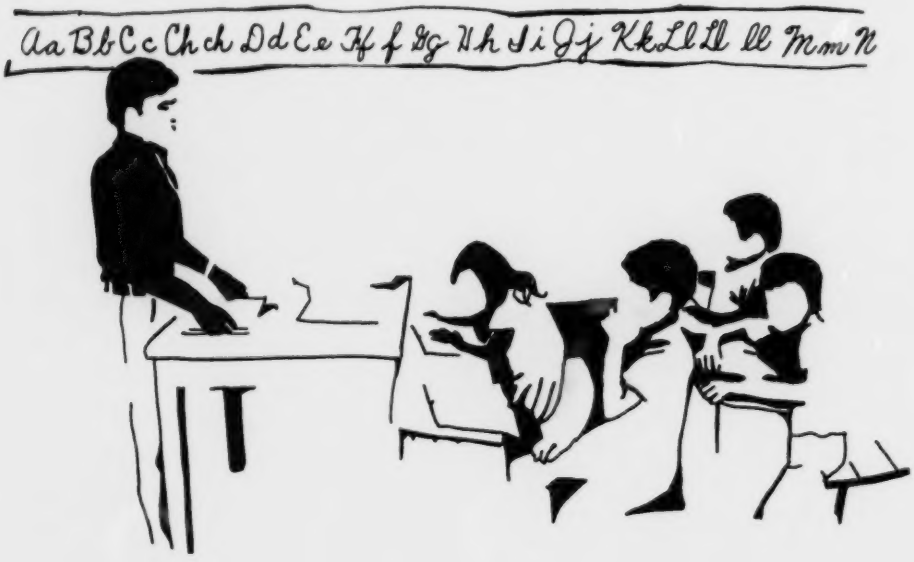
Jonni likes to go to school. His school gets some money from the Nicaraguan government to pay his teachers. However, every month Jonni still has to pay 10 cordobas, or $2.00, to go to school. He also must buy his own books, paper, pencils and uniform. He wishes that school was free so that all children could receive an education.

LISBET AND RAFAEL

Lisbet and Rafael live in the town of Estelí in northern Nicaragua. Lisbet is ten years old and Rafael is eleven. In addition to attending school, Lisbet and Rafael help produce a radio program every week for children. The name of the radio program is *Los Cumiches*, which means "the littlest ones." Lisbet and Rafael are part of a team of fifty young people who work on the program. They report on activities and invite the children of Estelí to join them. The director of the program is only seventeen years old.

Lisbet and Rafael are musicians and they write songs for the program. They make up poems and plays about children's concerns, such as school and friends. They also interview other kids about how they think and feel about things. One of the goals of the program is to educate children about their rights. *Los Cumiches* provides information to kids who have problems about where they can go for help. They believe that if kids have alternatives to living on the street or using drugs, they will make different choices.

In the video, Rafael sings a song that he wrote for his girlfriend Diana. It is still his favorite song, even though Diana is no longer his girlfriend.



Math Lesson for Weekly Shopping

The Tzul family lives on a small farm in Guatemala. There are seven people in the family, including a grandmother, two parents and four children. The family grows enough corn and beans for their own food needs. They sell the rest of their crops in the market to earn money to buy other food and supplies. Carlos Tzul is 12 years old and is the only member of the family who knows math. He must make recommendations for the family's weekly budget.

I. Help Carlos figure out the weekly budget. Currency in Guatemala is called a *quetzal* (Q).

The family <u>needs</u> these supplies each week:		**Quantity**	**Cost**
Rice	1 lb./day at Q2.00/lb. x 7 days	_____	_____
Cooking oil	1 quart/week at Q4.00/quart	_____	_____
Salt	1 lb./week at Q1.00/lb.	_____	_____
Candles for light	1 per night at Q1.00 each x 7 days	_____	_____
	Subtotal	_____	_____

The Tzul family also <u>wants</u> to buy these foods and supplies:			
Milk	1 quart/day at Q4.00 x 7 days	_____	_____
Eggs	10 eggs at Q3.00/ten per week	_____	_____
Chicken	1 chicken at Q15.00 per week	_____	_____
Fresh fruit	Q3.00 per day x 7 days	_____	_____
Fresh vegetables	Q2.00 per day x 7 days	_____	_____
Coffee	Q10.00 per week	_____	_____
Sugar	Q5.00 per week	_____	_____
Soda pop	7 people x Q2.00 per bottle	_____	_____
Shoes for a sister	Q40.00	_____	_____
Water pail (to replace leaky one)	Q15.00	_____	_____
	Subtotal	_____	_____

II. Five quetzales (5Q) is equal to one dollar ($1). Please answer the following questions both in *quetzales* and dollars:

1. How much money is necessary if the Tzul family buys everything they need and want? Q____ $____

2. This week the selling price for beans is Q4.00 per pound. How many pounds of beans does the family need to sell to afford all the food and supplies it needs for one week? Q____ $____

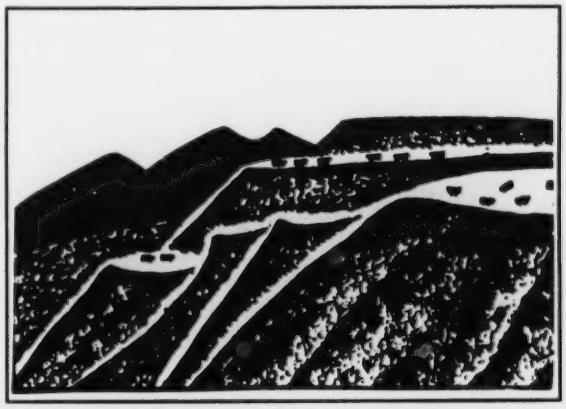
3. Only 16 pounds of beans are ready to harvest and sell this week. How much will be earned if these beans sell for Q4.00? Q____ $____

4. What items do you think the Tzul family should buy? Explain why you made these choices.

Lesson in Applied Geometry

Ana and Juan are working on their steep hillside field, preparing to plant corn and beans. Across the valley they see Jonni Frank and his father on the hill working in their field. They wonder why Jonni's land produces such good crops every year. Last year, Ana and Juan's field became too dry, and most of their corn and beans died before they were ripe. The same amount of rain fell on both fields, so why did their crops die while Jonni Frank's thrived?

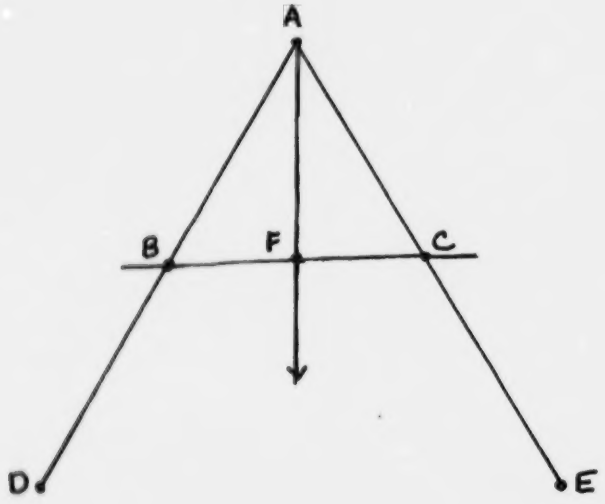
Carved into Jonni's hillside are small, level fields called *terraces*. The corn and beans are planted in these terraces so that the water soaks into the soil. This is important because it keeps the crops moist and prevents the water from carrying the soil down the hill and causing erosion.



Ana and Juan want to make terraces, too, so they ask Jonni Frank to help them. Jonni tells them about the "A" apparatus, a tool which has been used for many centuries by *campesinos* in the Americas. It originally came from the Maya people.

The "A" Apparatus is made with two sticks which are 6 feet long and tied together at their top, point A. A 3-foot long cross stick is attached half way down at points B and C. The points where the sticks meet the ground are points D and E. This forms two triangles. The mid point on the cross stick is found and marked, point F.

Label the known measurements on the figure below.

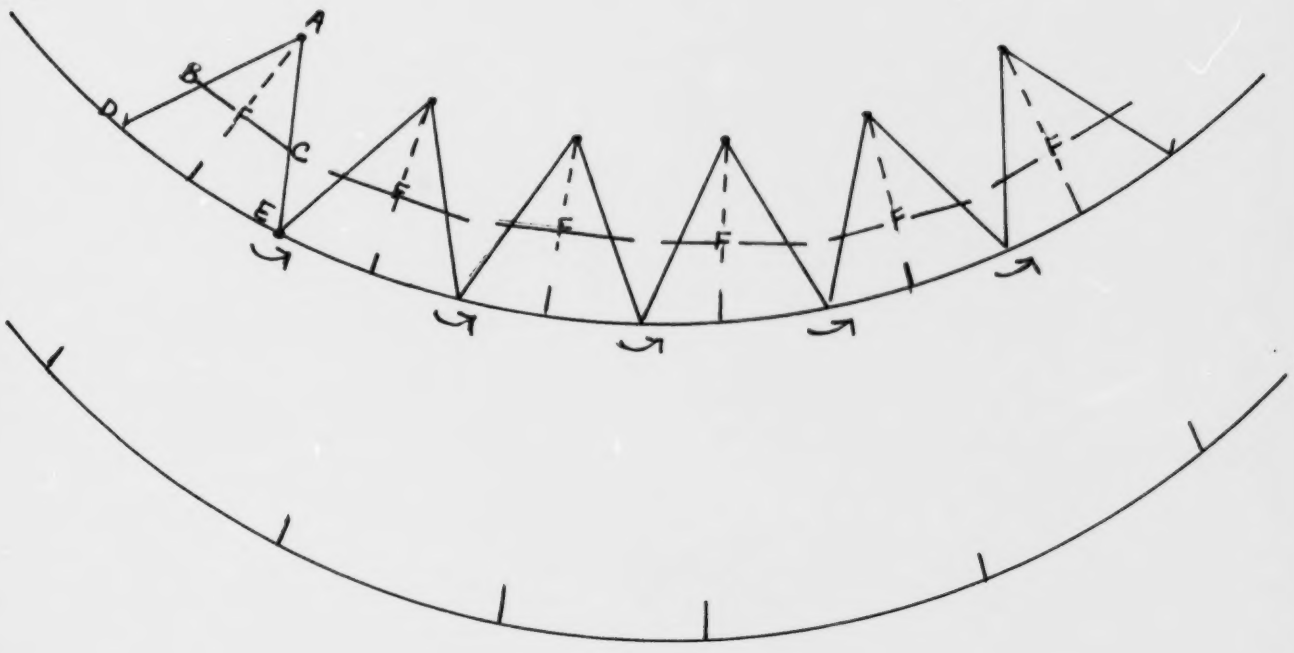


All of the angles ABC, ACB, and BAC have the same measurement. What is it?
If you create a line from point A to point F, what kind of angle is formed at AFB?

Applying this method to real life (for more advanced students):
Now, let's use this "A" apparatus to help some farmers solve a real life situation. The farmers want to plant crops on a hillside. In order for the crops to hold moisture and stop the erosion of the ground, they must level out the ground in terrances. They will use the A-apparatus to help them level the ground. On the A-apparatus described on the previous page, hang a 4 foot string with a weight on the end from point A. Place the two ends of the A-apparatus firmly in the ground and mark the new point on the ground directly below point F (the mid-way point of the cross bar).

Now pivot the entire A-apparatus at point E. When the string passes directly through point F again and point D has touched the ground, stop. Place another stake in the ground directly under the new point F. Continue pivoting the apparatus along the hillside, finding the point directly below point F, and placing stakes in the ground as you move.

When you have a series of stakes in the ground, connect the stakes with a string.
The resulting line of string will be a level path or terrace.
See figure below.



Using Jonni's instructions, make an A-Apparatus using sticks or light weight pipe. Find a hill and use the A-Apparatus to make a level path. If you want to make smaller versions, use 3 pencils or short sticks. Make a level path around a large round ball or a globe.

Country Profiles

	GUATEMALA	NICARAGUA	UNITED STATES
Area:	**42,042 sq. miles** *size of Tennessee*	**45,698 square miles** *size of Wisconsin*	**3,536,341 square miles**
Population:	**9.2 million** *42% live in cities* *58% live in rural areas*	**3.5 million** *59% live in cities* *41% live in rural areas*	**250 million** *75% live in cities* *25% live in rural areas*
Ethnic Mix:	35% Ladino *(mixed Spanish, indigenous)*; 65% Indigenous	93 % Mestizo *(mixed European, African, indigenous)*; 5% Indigenous	80.3% European American; 12.1% African American; .8% Native American; 2.9% Asian or Pacific Islander
Capital:	**Guatemala City**	**Managua**	**Washington, D.C.**
Geography:	Mountainous highlands from GuatemalaCity north (where In dian population lives); broad coastal plain (agro-export area); northern jungle areas; eastern hills and arid areas.	Western mountain ranges separated by fertile valleys; 40 volcanos along the Pacific coast; two large lakes; central hills; eastern tropical lowlands in eastern half.	Western Pacific coast, desert and mountains; central great plains; eastern Atlantic coast, woodlands, valleys and hills; southeastern swamps and deltas.
G.D.P.:	**$9.6 million**	**$3.07 million**	**$5.677 billion**
Chief Exports:	Coffee (31%), sugar, bananas cotton, beef, cardamon, non-traditional crops like cantaloupe, cauliflower, broccoli and snow peas.	Coffee, sugar, cotton, timber, beef, seafood.	Machinery and chemicals, aircraft, military equipment, cereals, motor vehicles, grains.
Export customers:	U.S. (29%) European Community (17%) Latin America (35%)	U.S. (26%) European Comm. (16%); Latin America (11%)	Canada, Japan, Western Europe
Land distribution:	2% of landowners hold 65% of land; 78% of farms use 10% of farm land (the most unequal in Central America)	78% small and medium farms; 7.5% Large farms	
Per capita income:	**$1,180**	**$470**	**$19,000**
Income distribution:	**86% live in poverty**	**57% live in poverty**	
Life expectancy:	**49 years**	**63 years**	**76 years**
Infant mortality:	**61 per 1,000 live births**	**65 per 1,000 live births**	**9 per 1,000 live births**
Adult literacy:	**52% Ladino;** **23% Indigenous**	**48% before 1979 revolution; 88% after revolution**	**95%**

Significant Historical Events

Guatemala

1993	President Serrano fired by Congress following a military coup; Ramiro de León Carpio elected president by Congress.
1992	Human rights worker Rigoberta Menchú becomes the first Latin American indigenous woman to receive Nobel Peace Prize.
1982	Guerrilla groups become unified under one umbrella organization called URNG.
1980	Spanish Embassy burned to ground by the Guatemalan government to oust 39 campesinos who were occupying it as part of a protest. Among those killed is Vicente Menchú, father of 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú.
1978	Civil War between peasants and government begins; continues to present day.
1977	U.S. President Carter stops U.S. military aid to Guatemala.
1976	Earthquake kills 22,000 and devastates hundreds of villages.
1962	Guerrilla groups begin to form to regain rights for peasants.
1957	Military takes control of government.
1954	U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) overthrows Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz; land reform /program ends.
1944	Revolution by peasants results in the beginning of land reform.
1921	Military government installed.
1901	First U.S. corporation is established; United Fruit Company begins exporting bananas from Guatemala.
1823	U.S. announces Monroe Doctrine.
1821	Guatemala declares independence from Spain.
1524	Spain conquers Guatemala led by Pedro de Alvarado.
300-900	Classic Maya Period

Nicaragua

1990	Violeta Chamorro elected president from United National Opposition (UNO) party.
1984	Daniel Oretga elected president from Sandinista Party.
1982-1990	U.S. funded counter-revolutionaries (*contras*) try to retake Nicaragua.
1981	Land reform and health care campaign.
1980	Literacy campaign reduces illiteracy by 50 percent.
1979	Triumph of the Revolution led by Sandinista Party; Dictator Anastasio Somoza flees to Miami.
1972	Earthquake destroys Managua.
1961	National Sandinista Front for Liberation (FSLN) is formed.
1934-79	Somoza family's 45 year regime.
1934	Augusto Sandino killed.
1926-33	U.S. Marines occupy Nicaragua; Augusto Sandino leads peasant army against Marines
1855	U.S. tries to get rights to build a canal across Nicaragua; U.S. soldier William Walker, declares himself president.
1821	Nicaragua becomes independent from Spain.
1524	Spain conquers Nicaragua

Guatemala

Inforpress Centroamericana

Nicaragua

Inforpress Centroamericana

The Rights of the Child

Abbreviated from the United Nations Declaration

1. All children, without regard to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, are entitled to the rights set out in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations, 1959.

2. Every child shall have special protection and opportunities to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially.

3. Every child shall be entitled to a name and nationality.

4. Every child shall have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and health care.

5. The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given special treatment, education and care.

6. Whenever possible, every child should grow up with his or her parents. Society has the duty to care for children without family and means of support.

7. Every child is entitled to free and compulsory education.

8. The child shall always be among the first to receive protection and relief.

9. Every child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. Child labor shall not be allowed.

10. Every child shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, peace and universal friendship.

Recommended Resources

Guatemala

The Bird Who Cleans the World and Other Mayan Fables, by Victor Montejo. Curbstone Press, 1991. Traditional folktales about creation, nature, respect and conflict. All ages. $13.95.*

The Cost of Your Shirt, by Resource Center of The Americas, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1993. A simulation based on the real struggle of Guatemalan textile workers. High school and adult. $4.00.*

Guatemala: Children of the World Series, by Ronnie Cummins. Gareth Stevens Children's Books, 1990. Overview, with focus on children. Excellent photographs. Grades 4-6. Hardcover. $21.25.*

The Hummingbird King, by Argentina Palacios. Troll Associates, 1993. A Mayan legend about nature and the quetzal bird who dies if taken captive. Grades 3-5. $3.95.*

Inside Guatemala, by Tom Barry. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, Albuquerque, NM, 1992. Current information on politics, economy, society and environment. High school and adult. $9.95.

I, Rigoberta Menchú, spoken by Rigoberta Menchu and edited by Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. Verso, London, 1983. The life story of Rigoberta Menchú, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her work to improve human rights for indigenous and non-indigenous people in Guatemala. $16.95.*

Rigoberta Menchú: The Prize that Broke the Silence, by Resource Center of The Americas, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1993. An activity-based educational packet that focuses on the work of 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú. English or Spanish. High School. $7.00.*

The Most Beautiful Place in the World, by Ann Cameron. Alfred Knopf, 1988. The story of a young Guatemalan boy and his grandmother. Grades 3-5. Paperback. $2.99.

Song of the Chirimia: A Guatemalan Folktale / La Musica de la Chirimia: Folklore Guatemalteco, retold and illustrated by Jane Anne Volkmer. Carolrhoda Books, Minneapolis, 1990. Bilingual. $6.95. *

Nicaragua

Las Cazadores Invisibles / The Invisible Hunters, retold by Harriet Rohmer. Children's Book Press, 1987. A bilingual legend of the Mosquito Indians from the east coast of Nicaragua about change in a traditional culture. Spanish and English. Grades 3-5. Hardcover. $12.95.*

Nicaragua: Struggling with Change, by Faith Adams. Dillon Press, Minneapolis, 1987. Discovering Our Heritage Series. Historical overview up to 1987 and descriptions of daily life. Grades 4-6. Hardcover. $14.95.*

Nicaragua: A Country Guide, by Kent Norsworthy. The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, Albuquerque, NM, 1990. Current information on political, social and economic conditions. High school and adult. $9.95.

Human Rights and Children

A Child's Right: A Safe and Secure World: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, by Dorothy Hoffman, Cleo Simonett, May Eileen Sorenson. UN Association of Minnesota

Human Rights for Children: A Curriculum for Teaching Human Rights to Children Ages 3-12, by Human Rights for Children Committee. Hunter House, 1992. $10.95.*

Human Rights Education: The Fourth R, newsletter published by Amnesty International.

Human Rights, Plain Language, by Amnesty International, 1991. A simply written and beautifully illustrated summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. $10.00. *

The Next Generation: Lives of Third World Children, Judith Ennew and Brian Milne. New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1990.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Ruth Rocha and Octavio Roth. United Nations Publications, 1989. An adaptation for children of the United Nations human rights declaration. Grades K-3. $9.95.*

** All resources listed with an asterick are available at the Resource Center of The Americas, 317 17th Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN, 55414-2077. 612/627-9445. Please make payment by check, enclosing $2 postage for the first item and $1 for each additional item.*

The Resource Center of The Americas

The Resource Center of The Americas is a community-based non-profit organization which promotes justice, human rights and self-determination in the Americas by linking individuals, drawing connections and providing education about Latin America and the Caribbean. RCTA was founded in 1983 as a clearinghouse for information about the U.S. sponsored wars in Central America and the reality of daily life in that region. Our work has now expanded to include information and programming on the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean, with a core emphasis on Central America.

As a community-based organization, we believe that it is important to make connections to issues and concerns in the United States in order to make the education and empowerment of people in this country more effective and enduring. Some of our other publications and programs include:

- ***Rigoberta Menchú: The Prize that Broke the Silence***, a curriculum on Guatemala for secondary students, in commemoration of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Guatemalan indigenous leader Rigoberta Menchú. (Available in Spanish and English versions.)

- ***El Salvador: Conflict and Change***, a secondary activity-based curriculum.

- ***500 Years: Exploring the Past to Discover the Present***, lessons and information on 1492 and its impact on the present day.

- ***Centroamérica: The Month in Review***, a monthly, ten-page news digest featuring information about Central America gathered from a wide variety of international sources.

- ***Teaching About The Americas***, a quarterly newsletter for educators.

- **The Penny Lernoux Memorial Library**, a publicly accessible collection of books, articles and documents on Latin America, including over 90 periodicals.

- **An Education Project**, offering educator workshops, a Latin American speakers' bureau, and a curriculum lending library of videos and curricula materials about Latin America and related topics.

- **A Labor Project**, focusing on the emerging global economy and working in coalition with trade labor, environmental, religious and other organizations on economic justice issues.

- **A bookstore** specializing in Latin American fiction and nonfiction for children and adults, as well as crafts from Latin American artisans and cooperatives.

- Weekly educational events, cultural programs, Spanish classes, study groups, conferences, workshops and much more.

For more information about membership or educational resources at the Resource Center, please call 612/627-9445 (fax 612 / 627-9450), or write to us at RCTA, 317 - 17th Avenue Southeast, Minneapolis, MN 55414-2077.